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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS AS PREDICTORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL EFFICIENCY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KIBUKU TOWN COUNCIL, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent to which teachers' classroom management skills influence classroom efficiency in primary schools in Kibuku Town Council, Uganda. A cross sectional research design with mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed with 126 respondents comprising 88 teachers, 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, and 12 directors of studies from 13 primary schools. Data were collected using structured questionnaires (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and simple linear regression. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Teachers demonstrated very high levels of classroom management skills with an aggregate mean score of 3.98 out of 5.00. Particular strength was found in establishing clear classroom rules ($M = 4.32$) and maintaining positive classroom environments ($M = 4.18$). Areas requiring attention included smooth transitions between activities ($M = 3.67$) and efficient time use ($M = 3.78$). Classroom management skills showed the strongest correlation with classroom efficiency ($r = .74$, $p < .001$) and explained 55 percent of its variance ($R^2 = .55$). Qualitative findings revealed that establishment of routines, proactive behavior management, teacher presence, and positive learning climates are essential mechanisms through which classroom management enhances efficiency. Major challenges included large class sizes often exceeding 60 learners, limited resources, and inadequate teacher preparation. Classroom management skills are the strongest predictor of classroom efficiency among the three teacher ability dimensions examined. Improving classroom management, particularly transition management and time utilization, should be the highest priority for interventions aimed at enhancing classroom efficiency in resource limited settings.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Instructional Efficiency, Primary Schools and Teacher Abilities

INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is widely recognized as an essential precondition for successful teaching and learning (Marzano & Marzano, 2023; Evertson & Weinstein, 2022). Effective classroom management creates conditions that enable teaching and learning to occur efficiently by minimizing disruptions, maximizing instructional time, and creating a positive environment conducive to learning. In the context of primary education in Uganda, classroom management skills are particularly critical given the large class sizes, diverse learner needs, and limited

resources that characterize many schools, especially in rural areas such as Kibuku Town Council.

The importance of classroom management for instructional efficiency is well established in the literature. Time on task theory posits that learning is directly related to the amount of time learners spend engaged with academic content (Carroll, 1963; Arlin, 2023). According to this perspective, classroom management skills influence classroom efficiency by maximizing the proportion of instructional time that learners actually spend engaged in learning activities

rather than waiting, transitioning, or dealing with disruptions. Ecological systems theory offers a complementary perspective, explaining that classrooms are complex social systems where effective management involves creating systems and routines that allow multiple activities to run smoothly without constant teacher intervention (Doyle, 2006; Kansiime & Twinomujuni, 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of classroom management, limited empirical research has examined its relationship with classroom efficiency in sub-Saharan African contexts, particularly in rural Uganda. Most existing studies have focused on classroom management and student behavior outcomes rather than on instructional efficiency per se. Furthermore, few studies have compared the relative contribution of classroom management skills to that of pedagogical skills and content knowledge in predicting classroom efficiency. This study addresses these gaps by examining the extent to which teachers' classroom management skills influence classroom efficiency in primary schools in Kibuku Town Council, Uganda.

Literature Review

According to Ochieng and Atieno (2023), classroom management skills encompass the teacher's ability to establish clear rules and routines, prevent disruptive behavior, respond appropriately to misconduct, and organize the physical classroom space to support learning. These scholars distinguish between proactive management strategies, which prevent problems before they occur, and reactive strategies, which address problems after they arise, arguing that proactive strategies are generally more effective for maintaining classroom efficiency. Kansiime and Twinomujuni (2024) define classroom management skills as the teacher's capacity to build positive relationships with learners, establish mutual respect, create a sense of classroom community, and motivate learners to comply with expectations voluntarily rather than through fear or coercion.

Previous research has shown that classroom management skills are among the strongest

predictors of classroom efficiency. Teachers who establish clear expectations and consistent routines at the beginning of the school year experience fewer disruptions and better time use throughout the year compared to teachers who address management issues reactively as problems arise (Ochieng & Atieno, 2023). Several studies have found that the first few weeks of the school year are critical for establishing management systems that affect efficiency for the remainder of the year.

Kansiime and Twinomujuni (2024) found that teachers who used proactive strategies such as teaching rules and procedures, providing opportunities to respond, and using precorrections had classrooms with 85 percent time on task on average, while teachers who relied primarily on reactive strategies had classrooms with only 62 percent time on task. The researchers concluded that proactive management is both more effective for maintaining efficiency and less stressful for teachers. Notably, the relationship between classroom management skills and classroom efficiency appears to be particularly strong in large classes, which are common in Ugandan primary schools.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a cross sectional research design guided by quantitative and qualitative approaches enabling systematic description and analysis of classroom management skills and classroom efficiency as they existed at the time of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Study Population and Sample

The study population comprised 162 respondents from 13 primary schools. A sample of 131 respondents was selected using purposive sampling for administrators (13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, 13 directors of studies) and simple random sampling for teachers ($n = 92$ based on Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The response rate was 96.2 percent, yielding 126 respondents comprising 88

teachers, 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers, and 12 directors of studies.

Data Collection Instruments

Structured questionnaires measured teachers' classroom management skills using six Likert scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items covered establishment of classroom rules, behavior management, smooth transitions, positive classroom environment, efficient time use, and encouragement of collaborative learning. Classroom efficiency was measured using five indicators including learner engagement, achievement of lesson objectives, organization of learning activities, minimal disruptions, and learners' ability to apply learning. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha of .82.

Semi-structured interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from head teachers, deputy head teachers, and directors of studies. Content validity was established with a Scale Level Content Validity Index of .92.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics on Teachers' Classroom Management Skills (N = 126) *

Statement	M	SD	Interpretation
I establish and communicate classroom rules clearly	4.32	0.68	Very High
I manage classroom behavior effectively to minimize disruptions	3.89	0.81	High
I ensure smooth transitions between activities	3.67	0.86	High
I maintain a positive and supportive classroom environment	4.18	0.72	High
I use time efficiently to cover all planned content	3.78	0.84	High
I encourage learners to work collaboratively and respect each other	4.05	0.77	High
Aggregate Mean Score	3.98	0.78	High

Note. Scale: 1.00–1.79 = Very Low; 1.80–2.59 = Low; 2.60–3.39 = Moderate; 3.40–4.19 = High; 4.20–5.00 = Very High.

The highest rated item was establishing clear classroom rules (M = 4.32, SD = 0.68, very high), followed by maintaining a positive classroom environment (M = 4.18, SD = 0.72) and encouraging collaborative learning (M = 4.05, SD = 0.77). The lowest rated items were smooth transitions (M = 3.67, SD = 0.86) and efficient time use (M = 3.78, SD = 0.84), though both still fell within the high range.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between classroom management skills and classroom efficiency. Simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of classroom management skills on classroom efficiency. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phase framework.

Results

Descriptive Statistics on Teachers' Classroom Management Skills

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for teachers' classroom management skills. The aggregate mean score of 3.98 (SD = 0.78) indicates high levels of classroom management skills among teachers in Kibuku Town Council.

Correlation between Classroom Management Skills and Classroom Efficiency

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between teachers' classroom management skills and classroom efficiency. The results reveal a very strong positive correlation, $r(124) = .74$, $p < .001$. This correlation is stronger than that observed for pedagogical skills ($r = .68$) in the same study.

Table 2 *Correlation Between Teachers' Classroom Management Skills and Classroom Efficiency (N = 126) *

Variable	M	SD	r	p
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Classroom Management Skills	3.98	0.78	.74	< .001
Classroom Efficiency	3.72	0.79		

Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the simple linear regression analysis examining the predictive influence of classroom management skills on classroom efficiency. The regression results show that teachers' classroom management skills significantly predict classroom efficiency, $\beta = .74$, $t(124) = 11.83$, $p < .001$. The R^2 value of .55 indicates that classroom management skills explain 55 percent of the variance in classroom efficiency.

Table 3 *Regression Analysis of Classroom Management Skills on Classroom Efficiency (N = 126) *

Model	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	0.98	0.24		4.08	< .001
Classroom Management Skills	0.71	0.06	.74	11.83	< .001

Note. $R = .74$, $R^2 = .55$, Adjusted $R^2 = .55$, $SE = 0.53$.

Qualitative Findings

Four main themes emerged from thematic analysis of interview data regarding classroom management skills and classroom efficiency.

Theme 1: Establishment of Routines and Procedures. Respondents consistently emphasized that well established routines are fundamental to classroom efficiency. One head teacher explained: "Routines are like the oil that keeps the classroom engine running smoothly. In well managed classrooms, learners know exactly what to do when they enter, where to sit, what materials to have ready, and how to ask for help. They don't waste time asking questions or waiting for instructions because the routines are automatic. This means more time for actual teaching and learning" (Head Teacher 6, Private School).

Theme 2: Proactive Versus Reactive Behavior Management. Respondents distinguished between proactive and reactive approaches to behavior management. One head teacher explained: "The best classroom managers are proactive, not reactive. They spend time at the beginning of the year teaching learners how to behave, not just telling them the rules but actually practicing and reinforcing positive behavior. These

teachers rarely have serious discipline problems because they prevent them before they start" (Head Teacher 3, Government Aided School).

Theme 3: Teacher Presence and wittiness. Respondents emphasized the concept of wittiness, referring to teachers' awareness of everything happening in the classroom. A director of studies elaborated: "Some teachers have eyes in the back of their heads. They know what's happening everywhere in the classroom, even when they're writing on the board. They notice the learner who is about to whisper to a neighbor, the one who is starting to daydream. They address these small issues quietly before they become big disruptions" (Director of Studies 11, Private School).

Theme 4: Creation of a Positive Learning Climate. Respondents noted that positive, supportive classroom climates are more efficient because learners are more engaged and cooperative. A head teacher explained: "Classroom management is not just about controlling behavior; it's about creating an environment where learners want to behave and learn. In positive classrooms, teachers greet learners warmly, use their names, praise effort, and show genuine interest in their wellbeing. Learners respond to this by cooperating and trying their best" (Head Teacher 10, Government Aided School).

Challenges Affecting Classroom Management and Efficiency

Qualitative data revealed several challenges that teachers face in managing their classrooms effectively. Large class sizes were the most frequently mentioned challenge. One head teacher explained: "Our classes are very large, sometimes with over 100 learners in one classroom. Even the most skilled teacher finds it difficult to manage such a large number. With so many learners, noise levels are high, and disruptions are more frequent" (Head Teacher 5, Government Aided School). Limited physical space, inadequate resources, and insufficient teacher preparation were also identified as significant barriers.

Discussion

The finding that teachers demonstrated very high levels of classroom management skills (aggregate $M = 3.98$) aligns with Marzano and Marzano's (2023) assertion that effective classroom management is the essential precondition for successful teaching and learning. The very high score on establishing clear classroom rules ($M = 4.32$) reflects teachers' understanding that explicit

expectations for behavior create the structure necessary for orderly learning. This finding is consistent with Evertson and Weinstein's (2022) research demonstrating that classrooms with clearly established rules and routines experience fewer disruptions and maximize instructional time.

The high rating on maintaining a positive classroom environment ($M = 4.18$) resonates with Hamre and Pianta's (2021) work on the importance of emotional support in classrooms. Their research demonstrated that positive teacher student relationships and supportive classroom climates are associated with higher student engagement, better academic outcomes, and reduced behavior problems. In the Kibuku context, where learners may face numerous challenges outside school including poverty, food insecurity, and long distances traveled to school, a supportive classroom environment can provide the stability and encouragement necessary for academic success.

The relatively lower ratings on smooth transitions ($M = 3.67$) and efficient time use ($M = 3.78$) suggest areas where classroom management could be strengthened. Arlin (2023) noted that poorly managed transitions can consume significant instructional time and create opportunities for disruption. In the Ugandan primary context, where lessons are typically 40 minutes, even small inefficiencies in transitions can substantially reduce time available for active instruction. Teacher reports from Kibuku suggested transition times often exceeded five minutes, representing a loss of more than 12 percent of instructional time.

The very strong correlation ($r = .74$) and regression results ($R^2 = .55$) provide compelling evidence that classroom management skills are the strongest predictor of classroom efficiency among the three teacher ability dimensions examined. The 55 percent of variance explained by classroom management skills exceeds the explanatory power reported in comparable studies. For instance, Ogunleye and Adebayo (2022) found in southwestern Nigeria that classroom management skills explained 47 percent of variance in instructional time use. The higher figure in the present study may be explained by the particularly challenging conditions in Kibuku, where large classes and limited resources make classroom management skills more determinative of efficiency.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers' classroom management skills have a very strong positive influence on classroom efficiency in primary schools in Kibuku Town Council. Among the three teacher ability dimensions examined, classroom management skills are the strongest predictor of classroom efficiency. Teachers demonstrate particular strength in establishing clear classroom rules, maintaining positive learning environments, and encouraging collaborative learning. However, smooth transitions between activities and efficient use of time are areas where improvement is needed. The very strong correlation ($r = .74$) and substantial variance explained (55%) indicate that classroom management is foundational to classroom efficiency. In the Kibuku context, where large class sizes and limited resources are common, strong classroom management skills are essential for creating conditions conducive to teaching and learning.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports should integrate comprehensive classroom management training into both pre service teacher education curricula and in service professional development programs, with specific emphasis on time management and smooth lesson transitions. Head teachers should conduct regular classroom observations focused specifically on transition management and time utilization, providing immediate feedback and coaching to help teachers develop efficient routines that maximize instructional time. Teachers should establish and consistently reinforce clear classroom routines for common activities such as entering class, transitioning between tasks, distributing materials, and gaining attention, thereby reducing time wasted on non-instructional activities throughout the school day.

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